House Panel Chief to Seek Release Of All Files on Kennedy's Slaying

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS
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WASHINGTON, Jan. 21 — The chairman of a Congressional committee that investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy said today that he would ask Congress to order the release of all Government documents on the slaying in an effort to dispel public suspicions that the Government was involved in a conspiracy to kill the President.

Representative Louis Stokes, the Ohio Democrat who is chairman of the former House Select Committee on Assassinations, said the release of the documents, including intelligence agency files, could, however, strengthen evidence that mob figures were involved in the assassination.

The committee's files could be released if the House votes to do so, and Mr. Stokes's support would be influential in such a vote. But secret material held by other Government agencies can be made public only with the approval of the House, Senate and the President, and prospects for such approval are unclear.

The former House assassinations committee sent 848 boxes of unpublished documents it had collected to the National Archives, where they were to be sealed until the year 2029. But the idea of unsealing the files has picked up momentum with the recent endorsement of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts. Mr. Stokes said recently that he was leaning in favor of releasing the committee's documents, although he added that he believed they would add nothing important to public knowledge of the case.

But today he said documents assembled by the Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation should be released, too. These documents are not part of Mr. Stokes's committee's files, although the panel saw some of them in the course of its inquiry.

These files include transcripts of conversations among prominent members of organized crime that were secretly, and in some cases illegally,

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taped by law enforcement authorities in the six months before the assassination, said G. Robert Blakey, a Notre Dame University law professor who served as counsel to the House assassinations committee.

"In the interests of everything being disclosed," Mr. Stokes said in an interview, "let's get everything out that is sealed anywhere."

While a House vote could release the committee's files, there are concerns that the files, and the intelligence agencies' information, could reveal intelligence sources and methods, as well as raw rumors that could needlessly harm the reputations of innocent people.

A senior aide to Senator George J. Mitchell of Maine, the Senate Majority leader, said Mr. Mitchell supported the fullest disclosure possible of Government documents related to the assassination. "If Mr. Stokes comes forward with any proposal," the aide said, Mr. Mitchell "would review it."

A White House spokeswoman, Judy Smith, said of Mr. Stokes's proposal: "Presently, the White House has no position. We will of course review any request when presented."

Mr. Stokes expressed particular interest in the release of three tapes of secretly recorded conversations between F.B.I. undercover agents and Carlos Marcello, a New Orleans organized-crime figure, in the late 1970's in which Mr. Marcello reportedly discussed his involvement in the assassination. The tapes were sealed by Judge Morey Sear of United States District New Orleans in 1981 in order not to prejudice Mr. Marcello's trial for bribing a Louisiana official to receive state insurance contracts.

Mr. Marcello, who is 82 years old, was released from prison two years ago and lives in New Orleans, where Mr. Blakey says he is in poor health. When Mr. Marcello testified before the committee, he denied any involvement in the assassination. But he also expressed intense dislike for former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, whom Mr. Marcello held responsible for his brief deportation in 1961.

No Word From C.I.A.

In a telephone interview, Judge Sear said he did not remember the contents of the tapes and would not discuss them even if he had. Thomas F. Jones, an F.B.I. spokesman, said he was not aware of the existence of the three tapes.

When asked at a news conference today whether he would support Congressional release of documents relating to the case, the F.B.I.'s director, William S. Sessions, said, "The law, of course, will be followed."

Mark Mansfield, a spokesman for the C.I.A., said, "I don't have any immediate comment on Congressman Stokes's remarks, but the agency has fully cooperated with various bodies that have investigated the assassination of President Kennedy and will continue to do so."

Mr. Stokes's committee, which investigated the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. between 1976 and 1979, did not obtain the three tapes. But in its findings, the panel stated that Mr. Marcello "had the motive, means and opportunity to have President John F. Kennedy assassinated, though it was unable to establish direct evidence of Marcello's complicity."

The committee's report also noted links between Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby to Mafia figures, including some with ties to the Marcello organization and to Jimmy Hoffa, the labor leader who was being investigated on orders of Robert Kennedy.

Unlike the Warren Commission, which conducted the Government's official review of the assassination and concluded in 1964 that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy, the House panel found in its 1979 report that Kennedy "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy." But the House panel decided that neither the American nor any foreign Government were involved.

Conspiracy theories implicating the Soviet Union, Cuba, the Mafia, right-wing Cuban exiles and even the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency have long been in abundance. But they have been popularized anew by the movie "J.F.K.," which posits that the Government plotted to kill Kennedy to prevent him from withdrawing American troops from Vietnam.

Interest in Mr. Marcello's possible involvement in the assassination was fanned earlier this month when Frank Ragano, a lawyer who represented Mr. Hoffa for 15 years, told The New York Post that Mr. Hoffa had ordered him to tell Mr. Marcello and another mob leader: "They had to kill the President. Hoffa said to me, 'This has to be done.' "

Mr. Stokes said F.B.I. transcripts of conversations of several Mafia leaders before the assassination had been reviewed by his committee but were returned to the F.B.I. and copies were not in the committee's sealed files. "It seems to me," he said, "that anyone doing any further investigation ought to get hold of those wiretaps and analyze them for themselves."

Call for Stronger Resolution

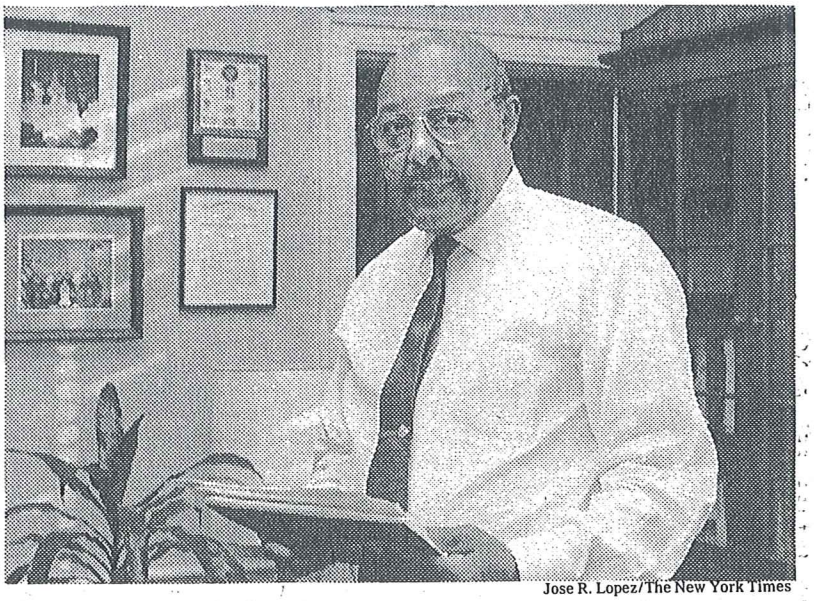
Under a House resolution to release the committee's documents, those files would not be released. "We ought not have just a House resolution but a joint resolution that would have the force of law" to open all Government documents, Mr. Stokes added.

Mr. Blakey said the conversations that were taped by the Government and reviewed by the committee included no conclusive evidence, but they indicated that the Mafia hated the Kennedys and believed the Kennedy Administration was a serious threat to the mob's operations. He said the F.B.I. files "have all the circumstantial evidence that leads to the judgment that the Mafia was involved."

Mr. Stokes said he also thought the C.I.A. files on Mr. Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his 1963 trip to Mexico City would also be of interest to investigators. They also were reviewed by the committee, but were returned to the agency.

Conspiracy theorists have long speculated that as a former marine who spoke Russian, Mr. Oswald could easily have been an American spy who infiltrated into the Soviet Union. Such theorists have wondered why the American Embassy in Moscow would have allowed a defector, which is what the Warren Commission said he was, to return to the United States and would have granted his new Russian wife a visa without undo delay or investigation. American intelligence agencies have long denied any relationship with Mr. Oswald.

Mr. Oswald visited the Russian Embassy and Cuban Consulate in Mexico City in September 1963, where his appeals to travel to both countries were denied. He returned to Dallas, where he took a job at the Texas School Book Depository, the building from where he shot the President a few weeks later.



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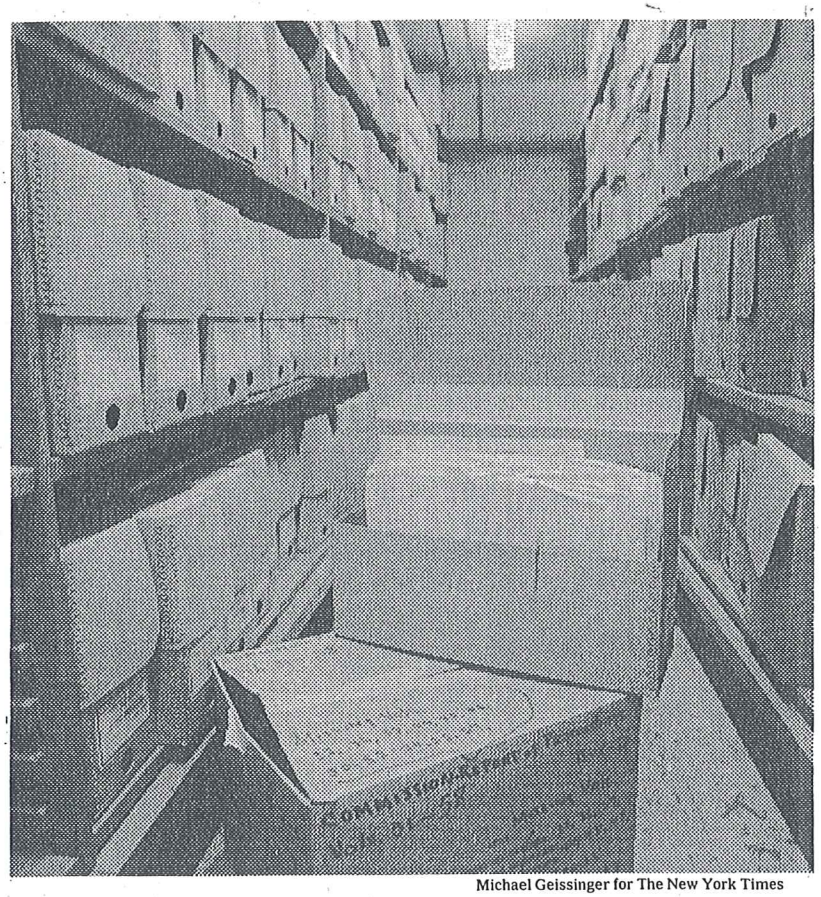

Michael Geissinger for The New York Times

Representative Louis Stokes, head of the former House Select Committee on Assassinations, said he would ask Congress to order the release of Government documents on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Assassination records are shown at the National Archives.